HUTCHISON, Carl Bertram 13

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Signature of narrator

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(dated) May 5, 1981

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(dated) May 5, 1981

Accepted for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project

by _____ _____
(Project Director) (Dated)

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General Topic of Interview: Life in Oakland (and San Francisco) from 1903

Date: May 5 Place: 4030 Panama Ct. #215, Oakland Length: 75 min.

Narrator	Interviewer
Name: Carl Bertram Hutchison	Name: Jorgen H. Christiansen
Address: 4030 Panama Ct. #215, Oakland 94611	Address: 769 - 60th St., Oakland 94609
Name & address of relative, friend:	Relationship to narrator [friend, neighbor, etc.]: friend
Birthplace: Tipton, CA	Length of acquaintance: 25 years
Birthdate: December 25, 1887	Occasion of interview:
Occupation(s): Retired salesman for Baker & Hamilton, Wholesale Hardware, S.F.	

Interview Data

Subjects covered, in approximate order, spelling out names of persons and places mentioned

Estimated Time on Tape	Contents
1A 5 minutes	Mother: Catherine (Cassie) Loretta Buck Hutchison Father: John Everett Hutchison Family background-Iowa, Kansas, move to Calif. Calistoga, and
10 "	move to Oakland (1903). Abrahamson Bros.; Kahn's; Keller's Rochdale Store; Sam Brannan
	Baker & Hamilton, Wholesale Hdwe., S.F.
15 "	first impressions of Oakland; downtown. Temescal; Oak. Gas, Light and Heating Co.
	1st Methodist Church Sunday School
	1st Nat. Bank. John Hill. (Pres.) Son. Harry Hill, good friend, became Admiral in U.S. Navy
	Frank Mott
	1906 earthquake; temp. home of B & H-3rd & Berry Sts.
B 5 min.	Sunday School teacher Ellen Fern (Dr. Fern's daughter)
	" " Fraterity "Knights of the Sq. Table" & initiation
	Lenhart's store. Initiation in paper. Robert Hutchison, architect
5 min.	YMCA on Telegraph - Cecil Martin. Australian, physical dir.

Use back of sheet if necessary (OVER)

RECOLLECTIONS OF CARL BERTRAM HUTCHISON (12-25-1887 to 4-14-1987)

I think it was sometime in the summer of 1903 that we moved to Oakland. Father was about 45 when he died in January, 1902. Mother was 41 and she had five of us boys to look after. Everett was in his 2oth year, I was just 14, Ralph 11½, Bob about 6, and Mark, 4. We were living in Calistoga where father had been the manager of the Rochdale store. Everett had been working there with him, keeping books and clerking. He ran the store(after father's death) until they got a new manager and then stayed on at the job. Ralph and I did a little prune and grape picking during school vacation, and mother took in some summer vacation boarders. Ralph and I were dish washers, and we hated it; with the boarders there were a lot more dishes, and it seemed to me that we were always arguing as to whose turn it was to wash them. That was the worst job with all the greasy pots and skillets. I don't know how much money we took in, but we got along. The directors of the Rochdale Store helped us out, and others, too, I think. We stayed there for about a year, and then mother went on the train to Oakland to visit the Shains, who we had known in Fresno. She looked around for a couple of days, and then came back and said," There is no chance for you boys here; we are moving to Oakland".

We lived for about three months on 18th Street just west of San Pablo Avenue, and mother started right away looking for a house to buy. Mr. Shain told her it was cheaper to rent, but she said maybe it was, but she wasn't going to pay rent all her life. She had $1000.00 and bought a house at 531 - 20th Street for $2500.00, and we paid off the mortgage in about eight years.

Everett went to work for the Rochdale Wholesale Co. in SF. Ralph and I started at the Emerson School at 10th and Alice, but only went there for a few days, for we got jobs and went to work. My first job was with Abrahamson Bros. at 13th and Washington, and Ralph at Kahn Bros. Dept. Store at 12th and Washington, as package delivery boys on our bikes; the pay was $3.00 a week for full time. When Bob and Mark got old enough to do it, they got as much for after school and Saturdays. Later on Ralph got a job with M.J. Keller Co., the leading mens Tailoring and clothing store. Then he got me on there, too, and we both worked there for a while. The pay was

fifty cents more a week. Then I got a job with the Oakland Cream Depot at 18th and Telegraph. Jack Schreiner lived next door to us, and he drove a wholesale butter wagon around town. It was a snappy rig, a panel top wagon nicely painted red and black with a fine team of grey horses. We called on the grocery stores (no super markets then, of course) and while Jack talked to the boss I would check the amount of butter in the box, and they would tell me how much to put in. It was a good job, especially when I could drive the team. The stores didn't sell milk then; it was delivered by the dairies and creameries early in the morning. I don't remember what happened to that job. It seems to me that Walter Smith drove the wagon for a while; he laterwas the butter maker there. Anyhow, one day he took me to the Tivoli in S.F. to see "Floradora", the first show of that kind I ever saw.

Everett took me to see Mr. John Diggs at Baker & Hamilton about a job to learn the hardware business. No jobs (available) just then, but he took my name. Then I went to work for the telephone company as a messenger boy. I got acquainted with the head switchboard man and he was going to get me in to learn that work, but a call came from B. & H., so I went to work there. They were an old, well established firm, and you knew where you were with them, but this telephone business, no telling whether it would amount to anything or not. Of course, I never had such weighty thots about it, working in S.F. and crossing the bay every day, that was something. I don't think I even asked what the pay was. One of the fellows asked me, and when I told him I didn't know, he said, "It's $15.00 a month", and he was right."After six months, if you are not fired, you get a five dollar raise". It was about the first of June, 1905 that I started there, so I got my raise about the first of the year.

A lot of books have been written about San Francisco of those days, and a lot more could be told. The store was at the corner of Pine and Davis and Market Streets, and was a four story building. Boys starting in went first into the bolt celler where Johnny Capurro held forth, and where they learned about all kinds of bolts, axes, sledges, wedges, and handles for all such tools. We really learned about such things and to this day it makes me mad when I read a story of a riot in the papers, and a reporter says that the men used axe handles for weapons. If you hit a man with an

axe handle maybe you would make him mad, but if you used a pick handle you would probably put him in the hospital. ~~THE~~ From there to the third floor were the shovels, forks, etc., and some shelf hardware, then to the second, and then to the order department, and so on.

On the fourth floor was the sporting goods department with guns an ammunition, fishing tackle, cutlery and bicycles. This was out of bounds to all but those who worked there. There also were wagons, buggies harness, etc. On the first floor was the tool department, sales floor and offices. The iron warehouse was somewhere near 3rd and Townsend; then there was the Sacramento store, and the Benicia iron works.

The streets in this part of town were paved with cobble stones, and when the big drays moved along they made plenty of noise. The drays were made with low flat beds, only a foot or two above ground so heavy things could be more easily loaded from the sidewalks.

We crossed the bay on the S.F. ferries. The Key System was not built until several years later. When the crowds came off the boat, especially the boats that connected with the trains at the Oakland Mole, there was a welcome committee of the runners from the hotels, and hack drivers. The hotel busses would be backed up to the sidewalk, and the drivers would be calling out the name of their hotel, and the hack drivers looking for fares, the competition was keen, and a cop was there to keep them from getting too rough; sometimes two drivers would be trying to drag a man two ways at once. The city salesmen traveled around town by horse and buggy, and as there were not always hitching posts where they had to stop, they had a cast iron weight that they snapped, with the strap attached, to the bridle, and so anchored the horse. A few years ago some started a discussion as to what they called these weights, but I don't think they ever found whether there was a name for them or not.

Sometimes we worked overtime; our regular hours were from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm, with 45 minutes for lunch. Overtime was about two hours, I think, and we got 50 cents for dinner. Pork and beans and a piece of pie cost about a quarter, so we made about a quarter on the deal.

There were a lot of oyster beds in the bay then; pollution was many years in the future, and oysters were plentiful, cheap and good. If you missed a late ferry, there was an oyster house a block up Market Street where you could get an oyster stew of

half a dozen fried, and sometimes you didn't hurry to catch the boat; they were good. There were other things such as Hangtown fry, which, I think, was oysters and scrambled eggs, and an Oyster loaf, which, I think, was a loaf of bread hollowed out and filled with oysters and other stuff. I never tried them, so can't tell about them. But , then I forgot, I'm writing now about the time when I was getting $15.00 a month, and, of course, I didn't get any of that fancy food then.

My first job (at B. & H.) was as weight clerk. The boss, for some reason, wanted to know the weight of goods shipped to our customers, so I was there at the scale to mark down the weights in a book. Right next was the nail cellar, that part of the cellar under the sidewalk on the Davis Street side. There were kept nails and rope. "Henry the nail slinger" (I don't think I ever heard his name) was in charge there. He was a tough little guy from the Bowery. I don't think he weighed over 120 pounds, but he could throw 106 pound kegs of nails all day, stacking them four high, and always moving at top speed. He took a shine to me and started to teach me to box. He was very fast, and it was not often that I could touch him.

We had settled down in Oakland. Everett, Ralph and I were working and mother made a little money sewing, and when Bob and Mark got old enough they did the same. Most of what we made went into the family kitty, and mother kept us well fed and clothed, and payed on the mortgage. No welfare, and we were not under-priviliged.It was a normal thing then. Every month Everett bought a list of food from the Rochdale store as long as he worked there. Canned salmon was the cheapest meat, and we got a case of it every month, and mother knew a lot of ways to cook it, and it was good, too. Nowadays it is a luxury, almost. I was talking to Larry Knight a few years ago, and told of starting at Baker and Hamilton's, and he said,"You guys at Baker's were aristocrats; you got $15.00 to start, we only got $12.00". Norman Allinger told of how his mother used to make clam chowder, and when there were no clams, she made it with bacon.

There were always a number of express wagons at the city hall plaza in Oakland and if you wanted to move you just went down there and hired one. In the park was a cannon, a trophy of the Spanish war, and one Fourth of July someone loaded it and fired it about four o'clock in the morning, and made a fine noise, and broke a few windows. I don't think they ever found out who did it, but they filled it with cement so it couldn't happen again.

We had some celebrities, too. Jack London, for one. We had read some of his stories, Tales of the Fish Patrol, which had been published in Youth's Companion, I think. And I think he had the Snark moored at the foot of Broadway before he started his cruise to the South Pacific. I remember it - Everett, Ralph and I went down to see it. When I was working for M.J. Keller I delivered a suit to him at a flat at about 30th and Grove, but I don't remember whether he was there, or who took the package.

Then there was Joaquin Miller; I think his name was Cincinattus Heone Miller - no wonder he changed it to Joaquin. I remember seeing him one day on Washington Street across from Keller's store, long hair, big felt hat and boots, which he wore at all times, I think. A number of years later I went with a crowd of young folks from the First Methodist Church to see him. It had been the custom to have a short meeting and breakfast on Thanksgiving morning, and then go for a hike, and this day we went to his place. When we got there, there was no one in sight, so Harry Hollidge and I went to look for him. We went to the house, and as the door was open looked in and Joaquin was there in bed. We told him that he had callers, so he kicked off the covers, put on his hat, and was ready to go. He was fully clothed, even had his boots on.

Then there was Borax Smith, who had made his money in the borax mines (Twenty Mule Team Borax), and then moved to Oakland, and was in the streetcar and real estate business. Jack London's novel, Burning Daylight, was based, in part, I believe, on his life. Ina Coolbrith was the Librarian, and was state poet laureate, and Robert Louis Stevenson lived here for a while. I don't know the dates, but there is a lot of history here.

I don't know where the boundry lines of Oakland were when we came here. There were a number of small towns; out at Telegraph Ave. and fiftieth was Temescal, not really much of a town, but there were some stores and a hotel, and a cannery, I think. Mostly it was Italian truck gardens and dairies. I remember going out there in the butter wagon, and Jack took me to lunch at the Italian Hotel. The place where I live now (450 Clifton St.) was a creamery, and a brother

of Walter Smith was a butter maker there. Out to eastward there were Fruitvale, Dimond, Allendale, Melrose, and Elmhurst. They were taken into Oakland over a a period of years. San Leandro was the "Cherry City" and was a good place to go in the summer.

The main thing I remember about the amusement parks is the scenic railways, tho why they called them that I don't know, for there wasn't much "scenic" about them, but they were fun to ride. There was an enormous one at Idora Park out on Telegraph Avenue. At the "Chutes" in San Francisco you would "shoot the chutes" in a square ended flatboat which was hauled to the top of a long slide covered with water, and then slide down with everyone yelling squealing till they hit the pool at the bottom, bounced a few times, and then came in for the next lot. Out at the beach was Sutro Baths and another park, and up on the hill was Sutro Gardens. Shell Mound Park in Emeryville was the place where the German Schutzen societies held their picnics and target shooting matches; Mike Housner, a salesman at Baker & Hamilton's had one of their guns, and used to shoot there. These guns were heavy, long barreled rifles with fancy carved stocks, and were beautifully made. No good for anything else, but that's what they were made for. I think I was there once at a picnic, but I don't remember anything about it. Then there was the baseball park there, too.

"BASEBALL TODAY", A big voice came booming down the street, and a man in a baseball uniform, riding an old horse, came down the street announcing the game for the day. "Fog Horn"Murphy, I think they called him, and he rode around the down section of town on game days for many years. The Coast League was one of the best minor leagues in the country, and the Oakland Oaks and the S.F. Seals were among the best. Many young players went from here to the majors. This was probably the only place in the country where there were games every weekend, as if the Oaks were away, the Seals would be here, and visa versa. On Sundays they would play a game at Emeryville in the morning, and at San Francisco in the afternoon. One year, when the Oaks had won the P.C. pennant, Bud Sharpe, the manager, was the hero of the day. One of our neighbors gave Mark a pup, and he named it Bud

Sharpe. A good dog he turned out to be, too.

It seems to me that in the time before the First World War there were more good shows than at any time after. Plays, light operas, and grand opera; the Gilbert and Sullivans, of course. I remember especially seeing De Wolf Hopper in the Mikado. They would always call him back for curtain calls until he gave them "Casey at The Bat". Then the Red Mill, Student Prince, Soring Maid, Merry Widow, Chocolate Soldier, etc., and best of all, the grand operas. A number of the fellows I worked with at Baker and Hamiltons were nuts, opera nuts, that is, and when they came to town we saw all of them that we could. When we had money we sometimes took a girl friend to see a play or a light opera, but never a grand opera. They wouldn't appreciate it. Of course, the main reason was that when a troup came to town for two or three weeks, they would put on several operas, and we wanted to see all of them that we could, and so climbed the stairs to the top gallery where the air was usually pretty fragrant of garlic, but the audience there was always very enthusiastic with cheers and applause - it was lots of fun.

Some of the older fellows told me that they used to get jobs singing in the chorus at the Grand Opera House at Fourth and Mission before the fire. Harry Bultmann and Jim Greenwell were two of them. They both had good voices, and did quite a bit of singing. One of them told me that someone found a way to get into the empty loft just across a narrow alley from the scene loft of the opera house, and they got a long plank to cross to a window above the stage, and on nights when they were not in the cast, they would sit above the stage and take in the show; then one night one of them dropped his cap right in the middle of a scene, and later that window was nailed shut.

Jim Greenwell started as a salesman in the North Beach section, where a lot of his customers were Italians. Jim was a big, good looking fellow with dark, curly hair, and he had a fine voice, and of course knew a lot of the opera stars. A short time after he started, there was a big Italian celebration of some kind, and he got started singing some of the songs; he didn't speak Italian, but sang those songs in good Italian, and made a big hit; the people didn't find out till later that he was singing the names of his customers, and that sure made a hit with them.

But to get back to the story. We lived on 20th Street from about 1903 until 1912. The main retail district was centered at 14th and Broadway, and most of the big stores were within a few blocks of that point. The old city hall was right where the present one is, and the county courthouse and hall of records were across the street from each other at 5th and Broadway.

All was going well with us, and then on the 18th of April, 1906, at about 5:15 in the morning, the earth began to shake, and how it shook. We had, of course, felt a number of earthquakes before, and hadn't thot much about them, they were just one of those things that happened, but this one was different. Ralph and I were sleeping in a room that had been added to the back porch of the house, and we were rolled violently in the bed. There was a toilet on the porch with an overhead water tank, and most of the water was shaken out of it. Ralph said something about it having been a rough one, and we were going back to sleep when mother came to see if we were all right. She told us that the chimney on Schreiner's house next door had fallen, and the bricks had banged against our house. Then Everett came in and he had been out and told of the new Baptist Church at 21st and Telegraph had been damaged, the belfrey on the dome was spread all over the street. He shut off the gas at the meter. We decided that we had better get up and have a look.

I don't remember what we did about cooking - it wasn't safe to use the stove until the chimneys were rebuilt, some people moved their stoves out into the yard, or on the sidewalks, and cooked there. Anyhow, we got some breakfast, and Everett and I started to work. We both worked in San Francisco, and traveled on the S.F. Ferries. There were two steam trains running to the ferries; one to the Alameda Pier came up Webster Street to 14th and Franklin, and the other on Seventh Street ran to the Oakland Mole.

We found that the Alameda line wasn't running, the tracks across the Alameda marsh were all out of line, and it took several months to get it running again. We went on down to Seventh Street and the trains were not running on schedule. A train came in from S.F. loaded with the first refugees that we had seen, some half dressed and carrying bundles; one fellow had lost his hat and was waving

his arms and telling us that San Francisco was all afire. We thot he was crazy, but when we got on the ferry boat a little later we could see fires all over town.

Everett got up to the place where he worked and helped save the books and some other stuff. I tried to get up to Davis Street, but the buildings on both sides of the street were burning, so I didn't get very far from the ferry building. Market Street was a mess; the cable car tracks were solidly built of concrete, and hadn't moved, but the cobble stone pavement along side was all waves where it had sunk. There were new light quakes every little while, and bricks falling from the buildings still standing.

I hadn't any lunch with me , and, of course, there was no place to get any, and more specially a drink of water, so I went home early in the afternoon. There was quite a lot of damage to buildings in Oakland, of course, but no big fires, so we got off fairly easy. All the chimneys on our street, I think, were down; the repair men had plenty of work for some time.

I tried to go to S.F. again the next day, but they had the National Guard out, and no one could go without a pass. On the way home I stopped at the creamery where I had worked a few years before, to get a drink of buttermilk, and the boss came in and asked me what I was doing. When I told him I had just been burned out of a job, he told me to hop on the special delivery wagon, so I drove that for a couple of weeks until I saw a notice in the paper for all Baker and Hamilton employees to report, so I went over to see what they were doing. They had acted promptly, leasing a lot at Third and Berry streets; they had bought a lot of lumber from one of the yards that had not been burned out, and hired some carpenters, and were putting up an office building on the corner. We worked with the carpenters as others all over town did, and a lot of fellows kept on working as carpenters, as there was plenty of work for a long time. We framed up a big warehouse extending out on to the wharf, and a lot of the fellows were working in the burned out iron warehouse getting out sheets of corrugated sheet iron to cover it. then we put in wooden boxes for shelving.

They began shipping surplus stock from the Sacramento store, and the eastern manufacturers extended unlimited credit, so in a few months new stock began

rolling in. The stuff from Sacramento was shipped on small river steamers that could tie up at our wharf and unload. In the meantime, orders from all over the state and the store which normally handled business from here north, were getting the business from all over the state, and were swamped with work, so they sent a lot of us young fellows there to help out. I was 18, and most of them were not much older, and we had a great time.

I had been getting twenty dollars a month, and they raised it to thirty five, I think it was, and all the others the same, so we could get along, and we did very nicely. Room rent was about 2 dollars a week, and we doubled up - that wasn't too bad, and a Japanese restaurant served meals for 15 to 25 cents; a stock company theater show was 10, 20 and 30 cents. I remember The Count of Monte Cristo there, and I remember the cool milkshakes we would get in the evenings; the man had a big block of ice, and would shave off the ice with a little metal box with a cutter like a plane, and put it in a big glass of milk and syrup and shake it with a hand cranked machine. It really was a shake, and was nice and cool.

We were there for about three months, and then came home; the raise in pay stayed on, so that helped. The city was getting re-organized, and water, gas and electric service had been restored in XXX part of the city, and streetcars were running. The next few years were pretty rugged - ashes and dust flying around until winter rains turned it into a gooey mess, and ruins everywhere - great holes of basements full of bricks and rubble of all kinds. The warehouse that we had put up for a temporary store was not a good place for hardware - too damp, and it was a cold and drafty place to work. We got chillblains on our hands and feet, and the hardware suffered, too. Saws and other tools rusted, and brass fittings turned green from the fumes from the creek, so we had to clean up all the stuff before shipping it, and in spite of all we could do it looked awful. After a couple of years they moved to a new building on Brannan Street - a new brick building, and that was much better.

The city had been in the grip of crooked politicians and grafters, and the earthquake showed up some of their work. The new city hall, which had just been built at enormous cost, and which looked strong enough to stand most anything, fell in pieces. Concrete pillars, instead of being solid concrete, were thin shells filled with rubble. In the graft prosecutions which followed, Hiram Johnson sent Mayor Schmitz and Abe Ruef, the political boss, and others, to prison, and made such a name for himself that he was later elected governor.